

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Ki Tetzei
August 21, 2021 * Elul 13, 5781**

Kol Rina – An Independent Minyan, is a traditional egalitarian community. We are haimish (homey/folksy), friendly, participatory, warm and welcoming. We hold weekly services in South Orange as well as holiday services and celebrations which are completely lay led. We welcome all to our services and programs from non-Hebrew readers to Jewish communal and education professionals.

Ki Tetzei in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/2286/jewish/Ki-Teitzei-in-a-Nutshell.htm

Seventy-four of the Torah's 613 commandments (mitzvot) are in the Parshah of Ki Teitzei. These include the laws of the beautiful captive, the inheritance rights of the firstborn, the wayward and rebellious son, burial and dignity of the dead, returning a lost object, sending away the mother bird before taking her young, the duty to erect a safety fence around the roof of one's home, and the various forms of kilayim (forbidden plant and animal hybrids).

Also recounted are the judicial procedures and penalties for adultery, for the rape or seduction of an unmarried girl, and for a husband who falsely accuses his wife of infidelity. The following cannot marry a person of Jewish lineage:

a mamzer (someone born from an adulterous or incestuous relationship); a male of Moabite or Ammonite descent; a first- or second-generation Edomite or Egyptian.

Our Parshah also includes laws governing the purity of the military camp; the prohibition against turning in an escaped slave; the duty to pay a worker on time, and to allow anyone working for you—man or animal—to “eat on the job”; the proper treatment of a debtor, and the prohibition against charging interest on a loan; the laws of divorce (from which are also derived many of the laws of marriage); the penalty of thirty-nine lashes for transgression of a Torah prohibition; and the procedures for yibbum (“levirate marriage”) of the wife of a deceased childless brother, or chalitzah (“removing of the shoe”) in the case that the brother-in-law does not wish to marry her.

Ki Teitzei concludes with the obligation to remember “what Amalek did to you on the road, on your way out of Egypt.”

Haftarah in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/555429/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This week's haftarah is the fifth of a series of seven "Haftarot of Consolation." These seven haftarot commence on the Shabbat following Tisha b'Av and continue until Rosh Hashanah.

Forsaken Jerusalem is likened to a barren woman devoid of children. G-d enjoins her to rejoice, for the time will soon come when the Jewish nation will return and proliferate, repopulating Israel's once desolate cities. The prophet assures the Jewish people that G-d has not forsaken them. Although He has momentarily hid His countenance from them, He will gather them from their exiles with great mercy. The haftarah compares the final Redemption to the pact G-d made with Noah. Just as G-d promised to never bring a flood over the entire earth, so

too He will never again be angry at the Jewish people.
"For the mountains may move and the hills might collapse, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace collapse."

[Against Hate \(Ki Teitse 5781\) by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks](https://rabbisacks.org/ki-teitse-5781/)
<https://rabbisacks.org/ki-teitse-5781/>

Ki Teitse contains more laws than any other parsha in the Torah, and it is possible to be overwhelmed by this embarrass de richesse of detail. One verse, however, stands out by its sheer counter-intuitiveness:

Do not despise an Edomite, because he is your brother. Do not despise the Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land. (Deut. 23:8)

These are very unexpected commands. Examining and understanding them will teach us an important lesson about society in general, and leadership in particular.

First, a broader point. Jews have been subjected to racism more and longer than any other nation on earth. Therefore, we should be doubly careful never to be guilty of it ourselves. We believe that God created each of us, regardless of colour, class, culture or creed, in His image. If we look down on other people because of their race, then we are demeaning God's image and failing to respect kavod ha-briyot, human dignity.

If we think less of a person because of the colour of their skin, we are repeating the sin of Aaron and Miriam – "Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman" (Num. 12:1). There are midrashic interpretations that read this passage differently, but the plain sense is that they looked down on Moses' wife because, like Cushite women generally, she had dark skin, making this one of the first recorded instances of colour prejudice. For this sin Miriam was struck with leprosy.

Instead we should remember the lovely line from Song of Songs: "I am black but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not stare at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me" (Song of Songs 1:5).

Jews cannot complain that others have racist attitudes toward them if they hold racist attitudes toward others. "First correct yourself; then [seek to] correct others," says the Talmud. (Baba Metzia 107b) The Tanach contains negative evaluations of some other nations, but always and only because of their moral failures, never because of ethnicity or skin colour.

Now to Moses' two commands against hate,[1] both of which are surprising. "Do not despise the Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land." This is extraordinary. The Egyptians enslaved the Israelites, planned a programme against them of slow genocide, and then refused to let them go despite the

plagues that were devastating the land. Are these reasons not to hate? True. But the Egyptians had initially provided a refuge for the Israelites at a time of famine. They had honoured Joseph when he was elevated as second-in-command to Pharaoh. The evils they committed against the Hebrews under “a new King who did not know of Joseph” (Ex. 1:8) were at the instigation of Pharaoh himself, not the people as a whole. Besides which, it was the daughter of that same Pharaoh who had rescued Moses and adopted him.

The Torah makes a clear distinction between the Egyptians and the Amalekites. The latter were destined to be perennial enemies of Israel, but the former were not. In a later age, Isaiah would make a remarkable prophecy – that a day would come when the Egyptians would suffer their own oppression. They would cry out to God, who would rescue them just as He had rescued the Israelites:

When they cry out to the Lord because of their oppressors, He will send them a saviour and defender, and He will rescue them. So the Lord will make Himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the Lord. (Isaiah 19:20-21)

The wisdom of Moses’ command not to despise Egyptians still shines through today. If the people had continued to hate their erstwhile oppressors, Moses would have taken the Israelites out of Egypt but would have failed to take Egypt out of the Israelites. They would have continued to be slaves, not physically but psychologically. They would be slaves to the past, held captive by the chains of resentment, unable to build the future. To be free, you have to let go of hate. That is a difficult truth but a necessary one.

No less surprising is Moses’ insistence: “Do not despise an Edomite, because he is your brother.” Edom was, of course, the other name of Esau. There was a time when Esau hated Jacob and vowed to kill him. Besides which, before the twins were born, Rebecca received an oracle telling her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the elder will serve the younger.” (Gen. 25:23) Whatever these words mean, they seem to imply that there will be eternal conflict between the two brothers and their descendants.

At a much later age, during the Second Temple period, the Prophet Malachi said: “‘Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?’ declares the Lord. ‘Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated...’” (Malachi 1:2-3). Centuries later still, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said, “It is a halachah [rule, law, inescapable truth] that Esau hates Jacob.”[2] Why then does Moses tell us not to despise Esau’s descendants?

The answer is simple. Esau may hate Jacob, but it does not follow that Jacob should hate Esau. To answer hate with hate is to be dragged down to the level of your opponent. When, in the course of a television programme, I asked Judea Pearl, father of the murdered journalist Daniel Pearl, why he was working for reconciliation between Jews and Muslims, he replied with heartbreaking lucidity,

“Hate killed my son. Therefore I am determined to fight hate.” As Martin Luther King Jr, wrote, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.” [3] Or as Kohelet said, there is “a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace” (Eccl. 3:8). It was none other than Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai who said that when Esau met Jacob for the last time, he kissed and embraced him “with a full heart.” [4] Hate, especially between family, is not eternal and inexorable. Always be ready, Moses seems to have implied, for reconciliation between enemies.

Contemporary Games Theory – the study of decision making – suggests the same. Martin Nowak’s programme “Generous Tit-for-Tat” is a winning strategy in the scenario known as the Iterated Prisoner’s Dilemma, an example created for the study of cooperation of two individuals. Tit-for-Tat says: start by being nice to your opponent, then do to them what they do to you (in Hebrew, middah keneged middah). Generous Tit-for-Tat says, don’t always do to them what they do to you, for you may find yourself locked into a mutually destructive cycle of retaliation. Every so often ignore (i.e. forgive) your opponent’s last harmful move. That, roughly speaking, is what the Sages meant when they said that God originally created the world under the attribute of strict justice but saw that it could not survive through this alone. Therefore He built into it the principle of compassion. [5]

Moses’ two commands against hate are testimony to his greatness as a leader. It is the easiest thing in the world to become a leader by mobilising the forces of hate. That is what Radovan Karadzic and Slobodan Milosevic did in the former Yugoslavia and it led to mass murder and ethnic cleansing. It is what the state-controlled media did – describing Tutsis as inyenzi, (“cockroaches”) – before the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. It is what dozens of preachers of hate are doing today, often using the Internet to communicate paranoia and incite acts of terror. Finally, this was the technique mastered by Hitler as a prelude to the worst-ever crime of humans against humanity.

The language of hate is capable of creating enmity between people of different faiths and ethnicities who have lived peaceably together for centuries. It has consistently been the most destructive force in history, and even knowledge of the Holocaust has not put an end to it, even in Europe. It is the unmistakable mark of toxic leadership.

In his classic work, *Leadership*, James MacGregor Burns distinguishes between transactional and transformational leaders. The former address people’s interests. The latter attempt to raise their sights. “Transforming leadership is elevating. It is moral but not moralistic. Leaders engage with followers, but from higher levels of morality; in the enmeshing of goals and values both leaders and followers are raised to more principled levels of judgement.” [6]

Leadership at its highest level transforms those who exercise it and those who are

influenced by it. The great leaders make people better, kinder, nobler than they would otherwise be. That was the achievement of Washington, Lincoln, Churchill, Gandhi and Mandela. The paradigm case was Moses, the man who had more lasting influence than any other leader in history.

He did it by teaching the Israelites not to hate. A good leader knows: Hate the sin but not the sinner. Do not forget the past but do not be held captive by it. Be willing to fight your enemies but never allow yourself to be defined by them or become like them. Learn to love and forgive. Acknowledge the evil men do, but stay focused on the good that is in our power to do. Only thus do we raise the moral sights of humankind and help redeem the world we share.

[1] Whenever I refer, here and elsewhere, to "Moses' commands," I mean, of course, to imply that these were given to Moses by Divine instruction and revelation, and thusly did he pass them onto us. This, in a deep sense, is why God chose Moses, a man who said repeatedly of himself that he was not a man of words. The words Moses spoke were those of God. That, and that alone, is what gives them timeless authority for the people of the covenant. [2] Sifrei, Bamidbar, Beha'alotecha, 69.

[3] Strength to Love (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1977), 53. [4] Sifrei ad loc. [5] See Rashi to Genesis 1:1, s.v. Bara. [6] James MacGregor Burns, Leadership, Harper Perennial, 2010, 455.

[Before Going Out to Fight, Look Inside by Jeffrey Kress](https://www.jtsa.edu/before-going-out-to-fight-look-inside)
<https://www.jtsa.edu/before-going-out-to-fight-look-inside>

We know that every extra word in the Torah invites exploration to arrive at its deeper meaning. The opening words of Parashat Ki Tetzei require such consideration: "*When you go out to war against your enemies . . .*" Why mention *enemies*? Who else would one be going to war against? Rabbinic interpretations focus on the use of the plural (*enemies*) as signifying a distinction between categories of conflict, each requiring different rules of engagement. This helps explain why the rules of war that open the parashah differ from the closing instructions about how to fight Amalek. The Torah is talking about two different categories of conflict.

Conflict is inevitable (after all, it's "*when you go to war,*" not *if*). In fact, Judaism values argumentation. The Talmud reads like a ping-pong match of conflicting opinions. One noteworthy dispute between Hillel and Shammai lasted three years, until a heavenly voice proclaimed that both sides represent the words of a living God (Eruvin 13b). As is the case in Ki Tetzei, there are different categories of conflict. Hillel and Shammai's arguments, tradition tells us, were "for the sake of heaven" and these arguments are bound "to endure." Arguments not "for the sake of heaven" will end badly.

How do we know when an argument is or is not for the sake of heaven? The distinction between the two seems to have to do with intention: Does one seek to gain an understanding of God's will that leads to communal growth, or is one

only seeking personal power? If this is the case, then acceptability of a disagreement hinges on what we know about the other party's motivation. This is problematic.

A plethora of psychological research shows that we tend to hold biases that are self-serving and work against cutting others the same slack we cut ourselves. When *someone else* does something foolish or objectionable, we tend to read that as a sign of who that person is (and will continue to be). When *we* do the same foolish or objectionable thing, we excuse ourselves by seeing it as a momentary lapse. *You* trip because you're a klutz; *I* trip because the sidewalk was uneven. We divide the world up into what psychologist Joshua Greene refers to as "moral tribes," with *us* being in constant opposition to *them*.

Our self-serving biases are of particular concern given that our evolutionary, neuro-developmental journey has left us with an instinctive reaction to perceived threats: We fight or we flee. Conflict escalation can be seen as a cycle in which those involved mutually provoke one another's fighting and/or fleeing. Many of our disagreements these days take place in cyberspace, and the internet provides anonymity and algorithms that act-as catalysts to fighting and fleeing. Anonymity allows us to dehumanize our opponents by avoiding real connections. We become disinhibited and feel less accountable. Algorithms feed us information that confirms our own position, allowing us to flee from engaging with those with whom we disagree.

This brings us back to *enemies*. Another strand of interpretation of the use of the plural in this parashah posits that when we fight, we always face two types of enemies, one external and the other internal. The parashah opens with laws governing the treatment of captives of war. The commentator Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz (aka the Keli Yakar) explains that the second enemy here is the *yetzer hara*, the inclination for evil. Having vanquished a physical enemy, the victor must combat lust or desires for vengeance, and observe the prohibitions described. By now it is a cliché to say that we live in contentious times, where shrill shouting has taken the place of dialogue and debate. There is a growing tendency to approach those with whom we disagree as if they were Amalek, worthy of utter contempt and annihilation. The cycle of fight or flight and our cognitive biases create a self-fulfilling prophecy. *Look at the terrible behavior of my enemies . . . what horrible people they are. When I behave similarly? That's only because I was reacting to them.* It's unending; our "evil inclination" results in more shouting, calling-out, or canceling, not substantive progress.

We can fight the *yetzer hara* of conflict escalation by developing our ability to self-regulate our emotions. We can learn to recognize the bodily sensations of an impending fight or flight response and take action (for example, by deep breathing, or positive self-talk) to stay engaged. We can question our own biases and assumptions about "the other" and consider our goals and the best ways to

achieve them. After all, our tradition is clear that Amalek is the exception; self-regulation is the rule.

Dr. Judith Plaskow explains the contradiction between “remembering” and “blotting out the memory of” some enemies: “We cannot forget the commandments to exclude the Ammonites or blot out the memory of Amalek because their presence in the Torah reminds us of how easy it is to respond to vengeance with more vengeance, or injustice with more injustice.” As we approach the New Year, we’ll need to develop the capacity to stop that cycle. That work starts with ourselves. (Jeffrey Kress is Provost and Dr. Bernard Heller Professor of Jewish Education at JTS)

The Travesty of *Agunot*.

How a Good Law Was Hijacked and Turned into an Instrument of Oppression Ki Teitzei 5781 by Rabbi Yitz Greenberg

https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh_torah_source_sheets/GreenbergParashatKiTeitzei5781.pdf?utm_medium=email&hsmi=150305335&hsenc=p2ANqtz-9jwdMh-dApoZp7QS7qXlePKkQQx6EGrJFVJkcYTJSLDq7JJtljvz9FD8JldfeJwZ78gIKLCrQ12FaJgZBmBvm1PYT7g&utm_content=150305333&utm_source=hs_email

Parashat Ki Teitzei contains 74 commandments out of the traditional 613 in the Torah. 1 These include: the requirement to build a parapet on your roof so no one can fall off; 2 to give asylum and not return a fugitive slave to his master; not to take interest on a (non-business) loan being used for food or personal maintenance; not to oppress a poor worker but to pay his wages immediately because he needs the money; to return a cloak being held as collateral every night lest the borrower be cold (and unable to sleep); 3 not to judge wrongfully or unfairly in the case of outsiders or orphans (i.e. the weak and vulnerable); to leave over crops—such as grain, olives, and grapes—for the poor to collect; and to use honest weights and measures. I regret not expounding on these uplifting ethical mitzvot and instead focusing on a law which is being exploited to abuse countless women. However, it is urgent that this evil be stopped now.

The Torah portion instructs the husband to write a bill of divorce (called in Mishnaic Hebrew: a get) 4 to end a failed marriage. Initially a form of protection for the wife, in the past century, this commandment has been turned into a source of abuse of women in failed marriages. The typical agunah (chained wife) over most of Jewish history was the result of the rare case of husbands who disappeared. In the 20 th century, recalcitrant husbands have used their exclusive halakhic power to issue the get to withhold it, thereby turning the document into a lever for extortion and entrapping countless wives in broken marriages. What is worse, these husbands have been aided and abetted in this crime by rabbinic courts. This law is part of Deuteronomy’s emphasis on human rights, and was

intended to upgrade women's rights. In many traditional cultures, the husband had the absolute right to banish his wife irrevocably by calling her to the door and orally declaring the mantra, "I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you." The wife would have to depart immediately, leaving children behind, and herself without support for the future. By requiring a legal process, the Torah filtered out impulsive and thoughtless actions of rejection, and assured that a woman could prepare for divorce. Furthermore, the Rabbis later established the ketubah (marriage contract) which guaranteed that, in case of a divorce, the husband must provide the wife with a minimum settlement of 200 zuzim (silver coins).⁵ This placed her above the poverty line, allowing her to pursue some dignified life. How did a commandment with noble intentions go wrong? First, the Rabbis interpreted the Torah's direction "he shall write to her a bill of divorce" (Deuteronomy 24:1) to mean that only he can write a get, and that he must do so of his own free will. In the 20th century, unscrupulous husbands (or their lawyers) decided to refuse the get so that the woman would be chained, unable to go free from her husband. The husband then would demand either financial payoffs, less than equal divisions of property, or concessions on custody and control of the children.

In talmudic times, the Rabbis would not tolerate such abuse. If a husband was recalcitrant, the Rabbis ruled that he should be forced to issue the get. The husband would receive makkat mardut, the beating given to those who rebel and disobey Rabbinic law, until he said publicly, "I want [you to issue the get]" (Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 106a).

Maimonides offers a justification of this process (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Divorce 2:20). We assume, he says, that the husband wishes to do the right thing for his wife and children, in accordance with the Torah. If so, why is he refusing the get? Because the evil urge has seized control of him, like what later Jews would call a dybbuk. Instead of letting her go, he is holding her up for money or custody or plain spite. Therefore, says Maimonides, we beat him until the pain neutralizes the baleful influence of this evil urge. After this, he speaks what a good-hearted husband should say: I really want to free her and end the misery between us. In the 20th century, the divorce rate rose. Divorced women had more options of employment and self-support, so wives were less willing to stay in bad marriages and suffer. Moreover, when unscrupulous husbands grasped the opportunity to extort their wives, the judges of the rabbinic courts went along with this demand. They claimed that the husband's absolute right was granted by the Torah (i.e. God) and that they could do nothing about it. They typically advised the wives to grant the husband's demands, or face years of suffering in limbo. Thus twisting a noble law launched thousands of extortions, and the extortionists got their way. Thousands of women paid up to get their gets. Tens of thousands of children

received less or limited financial support and often suffered from poverty and deprivation.

Thousands more women were put in limbo, their lives constrained or ruined. Since in Israel, the rabbinic courts were given monopoly control of personal status, tens of thousands of secular, non-observant wives were thrust into this unjust situation. Many secular women gave up on getting a get. Many ended up with a second family or husband whom they would live with or marry civilly—although children of such marriages would be considered mamzerim (illegitimate) and would be non-marriageable by Orthodox law. Observant women trapped in this tortuous situation suffered the most. They could not move on. They could not start new lives. Many made the financial and custodial pay-offs and accepted deprivation as the price of freedom. Still others were held up by husbands out of spite and were anchored for many years in ruined marriages.

Why did the rabbis go along with this injustice? Many of the judges believed that God had given the husband this power over his wife, since women were subordinate to men. Still others rationalized that they were delaying the issuance of a get and thus protecting the institution of marriage against rising divorce rates (never mind that the marriage was hopelessly fractured). Overall, rabbinic culture fell behind the general culture which had by this time concluded that women should have the right to end a marriage just as much as men.

In America, the rabbis of Yeshiva University and centrist Orthodoxy came up with the idea of a prenuptial agreement, in which the husband agreed to pay a daily amount of “wife support” if the get was delayed. These rabbis also sponsored an organization, the Organization for the Release of Agunot, which organizes public demonstrations to shame the recalcitrant husbands into issuing a get. Sometimes this pressure works, sometimes not. This halakhic pre-nup seems to have significantly reduced get abuse, but did nothing for the thousands of women who are already chained in failed marriages. In Israel, the use of prenuptial agreements is far behind the United States. The result is an unfair get process. A survey done by the Rackman Center for Women’s Rights of Bar Ilan University showed that one third of all women who went through the divorce process in Israel were threatened at one point or another with withholding their get. Among Orthodox women, 50 percent were threatened with get-withholding. Thus, the vast majority of women who get their get negotiate the terms under threat of the husband’s absolute right—so their settlements are not truly an equal division, arrived at fairly. All this adds up to widespread mistreatment of women and deprivation of their rights in the name of religion.

In the last generation, Rabbi Elieser Berkovits wrote a halakhic treatise pointing out the surge in iggun (anchoring by recalcitrance). He urged rabbis to invoke the power to nullify marriages when the husband arbitrarily refuses to issue the get. Hafka’ah (nullification) is affirmed in the Talmud (e.g. Gittin 33a, Yevamot

110a). All valid halakhic marriages are embedded in rabbinic law and the rabbis' consent. In a failed marriage where the husband is refusing a get, the rabbis can withdraw their consent, thereby invalidating the marriage. 6

In 2013, New York University Law School and the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) convened a conference on the problem of iggun. In the main scholarly presentation, Rabbi Dr. Gerald Blidstein, z"l, 7 showed that, historically, there were several methods of ending a marriage without a get. These powers, if exercised, could end the problem of iggun. One of these powers is hafka'ah, as discussed. A second is kiddushei ta'ut (mistaken betrothal), where the husband has some serious flaw, which, if the wife had known in advance, she would not have married him. 8 This technique is in limited use by courts today, but mostly under the radar to avoid criticism from more hardline rabbis. A third is get zikkui (a get through agency), where the court acts on behalf of the husband to write the get when he is physically indisposed. Where he is wrongfully withholding the get, the court could act on his behalf to end his status as a wicked person abusing his wife.

This conference resulted in the formation of the International Beit Din for Agunot (IBD), promising to apply some of these alternative methods to free women and end the blight of iggun throughout the Jewish world. Despite the deep historical roots of these methods of marriage dissolution—and the IBD being run by well-respected talmidei hakhamim (traditional rabbinic scholars) 9—the political opposition to this organization was so fierce that they could only ever use one of the methods, kiddushei ta'ut. Although the IBD continues to free significantly more women from iggun than a typical rabbinic court, the general run of Orthodox courts continue to allow get-refusal to go on. 10 The Orthodox establishment largely opposes the IBD and treats the would-be liberators of chained wives as the enemy, instead of the recalcitrant husbands.

The Orthodox public continues to stand by as the blood and lives of innocent women are spilled. Modern Orthodox Jews push prenuptial agreements, but fail to challenge our rabbis to end the injustice of iggun. Out of ignorance and “go-along” psychology, they mostly accept the repeated—but false—claim that nothing can be done to end the problem systemically. The non-Orthodox public and philanthropists have also been guilty of bystanding—out of unfamiliarity with the issue or because they dismiss this as a problem limited to the Orthodox world. They would not ignore systematic abuse of women in other countries and religions on the grounds that this is the other's problem. They fail to take responsibility to act and/or support ameliorating initiatives, as if iggun is not a moral stain on Judaism as a world religion.

The God Who, in the words of Psalms (146:7), “does justice for the oppressed,” weeps while His Torah—originally intended for the improvement of women's lives!—is hijacked by recalcitrant husbands, enabled by important rabbis, and

turned into an instrument of oppression and impoverishment of women and children who deserve better. The law of divorce with dignity will be restored when we end human-inflicted iggun. It is time for the whole Jewish community to wake up, wise up, and end this shameful injustice. 11

1 Roughly twelve percent of the total! 2 This is generalized in halakhah to protect against any life endangering features in a home, such as today's unsealed live electrical outlets. 3 The equivalent today would be not to evict people too impoverished to pay the rent or mortgage. 4 In the Torah: sefer keritut, literally "a scroll of severance" (Deuteronomy 24:1). 5 This sum is for a woman's first marriage. The minimum settlement for other women was 100 zuzim; it might be expected that a divorcée from her second marriage would have some assets of her own left over from her first ketubah. 6 Berkovits' treatise is called Tenai be-Nissuin ve-Get (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1966). Despite its vast learning and just proposals, it was blocked by political opposition from ultra-Orthodox Jews. Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, in our generation, proposed hafka'ah as the solution to the spread of deliberate infliction of iggun on women in his PhD thesis. His proposal has also been stymied by opposition. 7 A leading rabbinic scholar and ordained by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. 8 The husband's recalcitrance in giving a get is often connected to other serious flaws in his character or emotional disturbances. Another example of kiddushei ta'ut would be if there was some fatal impropriety in the performance of the marriage ceremony, e.g. if one or more of the witnesses were invalid. 9 Notably, Rabbi Simcha Kraus, a student of Rabbi Isaac Hutner and Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, became Av Beit Din. He was recognized in the establishment as an eminent Rosh Yeshiva and past president of the Religious Zionists of America, and still was unable to resolve the issue—due to politics—before his retirement. Rabbi Y. Aryeh Warburg still serves as menahel (director) of IBD, and Rabbi David Bigman is the current Av Beit Din. 10 This is an informed estimate. Most rabbinic court proceedings are not transparent and there is no centralized repository of reliable statistics in this area. 11 Full disclosure notice: my wife, Blu Greenberg, is active in the International Beit Din for Agunot (whose operations I strongly support). However, all statements in this dvar Torah are strictly the personal views of the author—not of the IBD, nor Hadar, nor any other institution.

Yahrtzeits

Lisa Small remembers her brother Joshua Small (Yehudah ben Yosef v'Rivkah) on Tues Aug 24 (Elul 16)

Rebecca Greene remembers her uncle Howard Mendelsohn (Howard ben Yosef ve Freda) on Thurs Aug 26 (Elul 18)

Rabbi Lisa Vernon remembers her grandfather Arthur J. Vernon on Fri Aug 27

Coming Up At Kol Rina

Shabbat morning services will take place in the Kol Rina parking lot unless there is rain or the temperature is above 85 degrees, in which case services will be indoors.

Please note *earlier start time*: We ask that people come promptly at 9:45 or before to assist with setup, and that they plan on assisting with cleanup at the end of services. Many thanks to Harriet Hessdorf for taking over the task of lining up participants.

In accordance with CDC guidelines, masks will be required at any Kol Rina events that take place indoors. Please note that all other rules that were communicated previously continue to be in effect, including that all in-person events are limited to those who are fully vaccinated (plus two weeks).

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Monday evening minyan via Zoom

Our regular weekday evening minyan will take place on Monday, August 16, beginning at 8:00. Your presence allows mourners and those observing yahrzeits to say Kaddish. Please support your Kol Rina friends by attending.

Use the following Zoom link to attend:  
<https://zoom.us/j/97663987468?pwd=NjFhaVZUZkpSZ3pxQWJjOU5UWFR4QT09>

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High Holidays: Consider giving a "sermonette"

The personal insights that our members bring through "sermonettes" are among the highlights of our Kol Rina High Holy Days services. Sermonettes are short reflections on the services that combine traditional wisdom and the speaker's original viewpoint. This year, we are continuing the format of supplying speakers with readings on which to reflect. Please note that all speakers will need to attend services in person at SOPAC, as streaming will not be interactive. We also require that anyone presenting a sermonette be a member of Kol Rina. Please email Marianne Sender (mpsender@gmail.com) as soon as possible if you are interested in giving a sermonette at our High Holy Day services this year.

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\*\*High Holidays: Pre-Pre-Registration URGENTLY REQUESTED\*\*

We would like to obtain an estimate of the number of members planning to attend any or all of our in person High Holiday services at SOPAC on September 7, 8, 15, and/or 16. Therefore we ask you to provide ASAP your best (non binding) estimate of the names of your family members who are planning to attend any service, to Peter Greene at [Greenepeter46@gmail.com](mailto:Greenepeter46@gmail.com).

This is not the official pre-registration form, which will be sent out soon, but it is very important for our planning.

## \*\*High Holidays: Help Needed: Schlepping\*\*

Now that we are returning to in-person High Holiday services at SOPAC, we once again need lots of help schlepping our portable Ark, books, bima, tables and Torah scrolls from Kol Rina and back. You need not be a Levite, or even a roadie. A car would be helpful but not essential.

Here is the schedule:

- Bring stuff from Kol Rina to SOPAC on Monday Sept 6, 12:30-2:30 pm (Labor Day, very fitting).
- Store things in SOPAC kitchen after second day of Rosh Hashanah services Sept 8 (easy).
- Set things up again for Kol Nidre Sept 15, 12:30-2:30.
- Take things back to Kol Rina after Yom Kippur ends on Thursday evening, Sept 16.

This year is more challenging than most, because many of our "regulars" are unavailable and because of Labor Day weekend.

Please step up. Bring your family and friends! Contact Peter Greene at [Greenepeter46@gmail.com](mailto:Greenepeter46@gmail.com).